

The Man From Brodney's

By GEORGE BARR M'CUTCHEON

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(Chapter XVI.—Continued.)

"I have kept out of the way ever, keeping well out of range of marksmen in the hills. Their confidence was with the eyes, the tone of voice, the intervals of silence, no touch of the hand—nothing except the strange eyes of Lise."

What did it matter if a few dead impulses, a few crippled hopes, were left strewn upon the battlefield at the end of the fortnight? What did anything matter so long as Prince Karl of Brabenz was not there?

One night toward the end of this week of charming encounters—this week of effort to uncover the vulnerable spot in the other's armor—Genevra stood leaning upon the rail which inclosed the hanging garden. She was gazing abstractedly into the dark night, out of which far away twinkled the light in the bungalow. It was the first night in a week that he had missed coming to the chateau.

She missed him. She was lonely. He had told her of the meeting that was to be held at the bungalow that night at which he was to be asked to deliver over to Rasula's committee the papers, the receipts and the memoranda that he had accumulated during his months of employment in their behalf. She had a feeling of dread—a numb, sweet feeling that she could not explain except that under all of it lay the proud consciousness that he was a man who had courage, a man who was not afraid.

"How silly I am!" she said half aloud in her abstraction.

She turned her gaze away from the twinkling light in the hills, a queer, guilty smile on her lips.

Across the garden from where she was gazing herself bitterly Lady Deppingham's husband was saying in low, agitated tones to Bobby Browne's wife.

"Now, see here, Drusilla, I'm not saying that our—that is, Lady Deppingham and Bobby—are accountable for what has happened, but that doesn't make it any more pleasant. It's of little consequence who is trying to poison us, don't you know, and all that. They wouldn't do it, I'm sure, but somebody is! That's what I mean, d'ye see? Lady Dep?"

"I know my husband wouldn't—couldn't do such a thing. Lord Deppingham," came from Drusilla's still lips almost as a moan. She was very miserable.

"Of course not, my dear Drusilla," he protested nervously. Then suddenly, as his eye caught what he considered a suspicious movement of Bobby's hand as he placed a card close to Lady Deppingham's fingers: "Domine, I—I'd rather he wouldn't! But I beg your pardon, Drusilla! It's all perfectly innocent."

"Of course it's innocent!" whispered Drusilla fiercely.

"It's utter nonsense for us to suspect them of—Pray don't be so upset, Drusilla. It's all right."

"If you think I am worrying over your wife's harmless affair with my husband you are very much mistaken."

Deppingham was silent for a long time.

"I don't sleep at all these nights," he said at last miserably. She could not feel sorry for him. She could only feel for herself and her sleepless nights. "Drusilla, do-do you think they want to get rid of us? We're the obstacles, you know. We can't help it, but we are. Somebody put that pill in my tea today. It must have been a servant. It couldn't have been—er—"

"My husband, sir?"

"No; my wife. You know, Drusilla, she's not that sort. She has a horror of death and—"

"If the servants are trying to poison any of us, Lord Deppingham, it is reasonable to suspect that your wife and my husband are the ones they want to dispose of, not you and me. I don't believe it was poison you found in your tea, but if it was it was intended for one of the heirs."

"Well, there's some consolation in that," said Deppy, smiling for the first time.

The sharp rattle of firearms in the distance brought a sudden stop to his lugubrious reflections. Five, a dozen, a score of shots were heard. The blood turned cold in the veins of every one in the garden; faces blanched suddenly, and all voices were hushed. A form of paralysis seized and held them for a full minute.

Then the voice of Britt below broke harshly upon the tense, still air: "Good God! Look! It is the bungalow!"

A bright glow lighted the dark mountain side; a vivid red painted the trees; the snail of burning wood came down with the breeze. Two or three sporadic shots were borne to the ears of those who looked toward the blazing bungalow.

"They've killed Chase!" burst from the stiff lips of Bobby Browne.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHASE COMES FROM THE CLOUDS.

FOR many minutes the watchers in the chateau stared at the burning bungalow, fascinated, petrified. Through the mind of each man ran the sudden, sharp dread that Chase had met death at the hands of his enemies.

Genevra felt her heart turn cold. Then something seemed to clutch her by the throat and choke the breath out



"Can't something be done?" she cried.

of her body. Through her brain went whirling the recollection of his last words to her that afternoon, "They'll find me ready if they come for trouble." She wondered if he had been ready for them or if they had surprised him. She had heard the shots. Chase could not have fired them all. Was he now lying dead in that blazing bungalow? She screamed aloud with the thought of it!

"Can't something be done?" she cried again and again, without taking her gaze from the doomed bungalow. She turned fiercely upon Bobby Browne, his countryman. Afterward she recalled that he stood staring as she had stared, Lady Deppingham clasping his arm with both of her hands. The glance also took in the face of Deppingham. He was looking at his wife, and his eyes were wide and glassy, but not with terror. "It may not be too late," again cried the princess. "There are enough of us here to make an effort, no matter how futile. He may be alive and trapped up—"

"You're right!" shouted Browne. "He's not the kind to go down with the first rush. We must go to him. We can get there in ten minutes. Britt! Where are the guns? Are you with us, Deppingham?"

He did not wait for an answer, but dashed out of the garden and down the steps, calling to his wife to follow. "Stop!" shouted Deppingham. "We dare not leave this place! If they have turned against Chase, they are also ready for us. I'm not a coward, Browne. We're needed here, that's all. It's too late to help Chase. They've got him, poor devil! Everybody inside! Get to the guns if possible and cut off the servants' quarters. We must not let them surprise us. Follow me!"

There was wisdom in what he said, and Browne was not slow to see it clearly. With a single penetrating glance at Genevra's despairing face, he shook his head gloomily and turned to follow Deppingham, who was hurrying off through the corridor with her ladyship.

"Come," he called, and the princess, feeling Drusilla's hand grasping her arm, gave one helpless look at the fire and hastened to obey.

In the grand hallway they came upon Britt and Saunders, white faced and excited. The white servants were clattering down the stairways, filled with alarm, but there was not one of the native attendants in sight. This was ominous enough in itself. The sound of a violent struggle in the lower corridor came to their ears. Loud voices, blows, a single shot, the rushing of feet, the panting of men in fierce combat—and then, even as the whites turned to retreat up the stairway, a crowd of men surged up the stairs from below, headed by Ballo, the major domo.

"Stop, excellencies!" he shouted again and again. Bobby Browne and

Deppingham were covering the retreat, prepared to fight to the end for their women, although unarmed. It was the American who first realized that Ballo was not heading an attack upon them. Ballo and a score of his men had refused to join the stablmen and gardeners in the plot to assassinate the white people. As a last resort the conspirators contrived to steal into the chateau, hoping to fall upon their victims before Ballo could interpose. The major domo, however, with the wily sagacity of his race, anticipated the move. The two forces met in the south hall after the plotters had effected an entrance from the garden. The struggle was brief, for the conspirators were outnumbered and surprised. They were even now lying below, bound and helpless, awaiting the disposition of their intended victims.

"It is not because we love you, excellencies," explained Ballo, with a sudden fierce look in his eyes, "but because Allah has willed that we should serve you faithfully. We are your dogs. Therefore we fight for you. It is a vile dog which bites its master."

Browne, with the readiness of the average American, again assumed command of the situation. He gave instructions that the prisoners, seven in number, be confined in the dungeon, temporarily at least.

"There will be no other attack on us tonight," said Browne, rejoicing the women after his interview with Ballo. "It has missed fire for the present, but they will try to get at us sooner or later from the outside. Britt, will you and Mr. Saunders put those prisoners through the sweat box? You may be able to bluff something out of them if you threaten them with death. They—"

"It won't do, Browne," said Deppingham, shaking his head. "They are fatalists; they are stoics. I know the breed better than you. Question if you like, but threats will be of no avail. Keep 'em locked up; that's all."

Firearms and ammunition were taken from the gunroom to the quarters occupied by the white people. Every preparation was made for a defense in the event of an attack from the outside or inside. The white servants were moved into rooms adjoining their employers. Britt and Saunders transferred their belongings to certain gorgeous apartments. Miss Pelham went into a Marie Antoinette suit close by that of the princess. The native servants retained their customary quarters below stairs.

Far in the night Genevra, sleepless and depressed, stole into the hanging garden. Her mind was full of the horrid thing that had happened to Hollingsworth Chase. He had been nothing to her. He could not have been anything to her had he escaped the guns of the assassins. And yet her heart was stunned by the stroke that it had sustained. Wide-eyed and sick, she made her way to the railing and, clinging to the vines, stared for she knew not how long at the dull red glow on the mountain.

The night was still and ominously dark. She had never known a night since she came to Japan when the birds and insects were so mute. A somber, supernatural calm hung over the island like a pall. The smell of smoke hung about her. She could not help wondering if his fine, strong body was lying up there burned to a crisp. It was far past midnight. She was alone in the garden. Sixty feet below her was the ground; above, the black dome of heaven.

She was not to know till long afterward that one of her faithful Thorberg men stood guard in the passage leading up from the garden, armed and willing to die. One or the other slept in front of her door through all those nights on the island.

Something hot trickled down her cheeks from the wide, pitying eyes that stared so hard. She was wondering now if he had a mother, sisters. How their hearts would be wrenched by this! She was thinking of him with pity and horror in her heart, not love.

A question was beginning to form itself vaguely in her troubled mind. Were all of them to die as Chase had died?

Suddenly there came to her ears the sound of something swishing through the air. An instant later a solid object fell almost at her feet. She started back with a cry of alarm. A broad shaft of light crossed the garden, thrown by the lamps in the upper hall of the chateau. Her eyes fell upon a wriggling, snake-like thing that lay in this path of light.

Fascinated, almost paralyzed, she watched it for a full minute before realizing that it was the end of a thick rope which had itself in the heavy shadows at the cliff end of the garden. She was standing directly in the shaft of light. To her surprise the wriggling ceased. The next moment a faint, subdued shout was borne to her ears. Her light was checked by that shout for her startled, bewildered ears caught the sound of her own name.

At last, far above, she saw the glimmer of a light. It was too large to be a star, and it moved back and forth. Sharply it dawned upon her that it was at the top of the cliff which overhung the garden and stretched away to the sea. Some one was up there waving a lantern. She was thinking hard and fast, a light breaking in upon her understanding. Something like joy shot into her being. Who else could it be if not Chase? He alone would call out her name. He was alive!

(To be continued.)

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